

Defense Contractors Cut Top-Secret Clearances

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 25 — Rand employees and consultants with access to top-secret materials from 1,300 to 450 had been recommended to the Defense Department.

The nation's military and defense contractors, at the request of the Defense Department, report that they are quietly making substantial reductions in the number of their employees who hold top-secret Government security clearances.

The move, part of an Administration plan aimed at ultimately reducing the number of security clearances both in and out of Government, was prompted by a dispute last June between the Government and the press over the publication of a secret Pentagon study on the Vietnam war.

Dr. Daniel Ellsberg, a former employee of the Rand Corporation, a private consulting firm engaged in defense work, has said that he had made the study available to the press. While an employee of Rand, Dr. Ellsberg held a top-secret clearance.

Most of the defense contractors who have been asked by the Defense Department to submit their recommendations on which employees no longer need top-secret clearances are still reviewing their personnel rosters. The Defense Department said it would use the recommendations chiefly for guidance, and will retain the right to make the final determination on classification changes.

Indications from companies that have already completed their reviews are that the number of top-secret Defense Department clearances outside the Government will eventually be considerably smaller.

The General Dynamics Corporation, the nation's second largest military supplier and a major builder of submarines, reported that 1,528 employees, or about 2.7 per cent of its work force, held top-secret clearances before it began its internal review.

After the screening process the list has been pared to 638, according to officials at the company's headquarters in St. Louis.

Security measures at the Rand Corporation, where Dr. Ellsberg worked, have been the target of particular attention.

All secret documents at Rand's offices in Washington and Santa Monica, Calif., have been placed under the direct supervision of the Air Force. A reduction in the number of

Another major defense contractor, the Boeing Company of Seattle, said that its review was still in progress, but reported that at one Midwest facility employing 4,000 people the number holding top-secret clearances had already been reduced from 100 to 34.

Most of those who have lost their clearances were "people who at one time needed the top-secret clearances to perform their jobs, but who now for whatever reason no longer need it," according to Lowell P. Mickelwait, Boeing's vice president for industrial relations.

Won't Impair Ability

Mr. Mickelwait added that the reduction in the number of Boeing personnel cleared to work on top-secret projects would "absolutely" not impair his company's ability to bid successfully for defense contracts.

The reason, he said, is that the Defense Department permitted contractors to reinstate the top-secret classification any time within a year after downgrading "if a valid need arises." He said he believed that the ability to bid for a top-secret contract would be considered a "valid need."

Other major defense contractors indicated that they were making or had made similar reductions in the number of personnel with top-secret clearances, but were reluctant to quote exact figures for security reasons.

Ellsberg Is Commended

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COLUMBIA, S. C., Aug. 25—The Association for Education in Journalism today narrowly approved a resolution commending Dr. Ellsberg for a "valuable contribution to the people's right to know."

Dr. Ellsberg, who said he leaked the Pentagon papers to newspapers, has been arraigned on charges of unauthorized possession of secret Government documents.

In a related resolution, the association applauded "the courage and public service spirit of The New York Times and Washington Post and other newspapers in publishing the Pentagon papers."